

DRAFT PLATO BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Friday, January 18, 2013 - 9:30 a.m.

DCS Office, 21 North Park, Madison, WI

Present: Tim Otis, Chair, Marv Beatty, Patricia Becker, Sybil Better, Lauren Blough, Mary Boyd, Harold Green, Scott Kolar, Mike Lovejoy, Aleta Murray, Frank Power, Wendy Kerr, Barry Orton.

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Tim Otis called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m.
- II. **MINUTES** – The minutes of the November 16, 2012 meeting were approved.
- III. **TREASURER’S REPORT** – Mike Lovejoy distributed a report outlining PLATO’s financial status. The Operating Budget shows \$30,560.92 in year-to-date expenses compared with a 2013 expense estimate of \$61,904.00. This assumes that scholarship awards in the amount of \$6,000.00 will come from the UW Foundation funds. The Foundation funds total \$94,316.43 with the initial deposit and donations through the third quarter. Overall assets including checking, CD and savings accounts, membership dues received from DCS (on January 19, 2013), and the UW Foundation total \$130,199.42.

Mary Boyd asked to receive a periodic financial report for the Special Events activities. She also requested that a copy be sent to Bob Blitzke. Wendy produces a quarterly report that she could send to Mary. Because some trips require advance deposits, expenses sometimes exceed amounts received on the reports.

- IV. **PRESIDENT’S REPORT** – Tim Otis
 - A. Tim Otis said he addressed 50 to 60 members of the UW Retirement Association recently. He presented an overview of PLATO and invited them to join. Some already belong to PLATO.
 - B. Tim and Wendy Kerr went through a lengthy process of encouraging PLATO membership renewals. Some people are gone for the winter and they only participate in PLATO activities during the spring and summer. Wendy sent emails followed by mailed letters with membership forms, but only about 30% of the approximately 190 who were contacted renewed.
 - C. DCS has requested an increase in PLATO’s contribution for administrative services. Increased activity has put a strain on DCS resources. In preparation for the re-negotiation of the Memorandum of Agreement in July the Board will have to review responsibilities for administrative functions and determine how to provide additional support. With the increase in the cost of operations, activities will have to be prioritized. Perhaps *The Agora* could be produced every other year; maybe members would be asked to pay for event lunches.

- D. A modest dues increase will be a topic of discussion and a decision is expected to be reached by the March Board meeting. Too large a raise in the fee might be counterproductive, driving membership down. The exact amount requested by DCS will be determined when negotiations begin, but it will be more than the percentage of PLATO dues that DCS currently receives.

V. REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Curriculum and Facilities – Harold Green and Frank Power

1. Harold Green reported that the Spring Course Schedule has been published and the semester will begin with the Spring Preview. Wendy noted that she requested that the schedule be posted online this week.
2. Frank Power distributed an outline of the plan for the Spring Preview on February 20th at the Madison Senior Center. His major objective is to showcase all of the PLATO activities with special attention devoted to informing new members of learning and other participatory opportunities. The event will be divided into 3 sessions of 30 minutes each. There will be an opening song from the Chorus followed by greetings and addresses from PLATO leadership, Committees representatives, and DCS. Only the four coordinators of new courses will deliver short presentations. During the second 30 minute stretch people will be invited to meet with all course coordinators and committee representatives upstairs. The organization of tables will follow the plan of the successful Fall 2012 Preview. After everyone has had the opportunity to gather information on the various PLATO activities there will be a social half-hour downstairs where the majority of the refreshments will be offered. Frank has considered the evaluations from the Fall Preview in his planning and will also provide an evaluation for the Spring Preview to see if the evolving event is fulfilling members' expectations. Frank noted that the Craft Room will be available for use by the Leadership Task Force. Financial Resources and DCS representatives plan to highlight the PLATO Foundation scholarships. Tables downstairs in the reception area will be staffed by the Communication and Membership Committee.

B. Communications and Membership – Scott Kolar

1. Scott Kolar reported on the PLATO website development. Kyle Henderson has replaced Celeste Anton at DCS. He has agreed that the changes listed by Scott are necessary but Barry Orton said it may take a few months to accomplish. The plan is to hire someone to do the coding on the site under Kyle's direction.
2. Mary Madigan is looking into establishing a PLATO Facebook page and Scott said there are plans for placing notices about PLATO activities in local newspapers.

3. Greg Bell is continuing to plan a Membership Survey and welcomes suggestions for inclusion.

C. Special Events - Mary Boyd

1. Mary Boyd noted that the Sheraton Hotel is reserved for the Annual Luncheon on Wednesday May 22nd. She will ask Wendy to include a “save the date” note in the Weekly Announcements.
2. In February there is a theater trip to Chicago to see “Other Desert Cities.” A tour of the Picasso exhibit at the Chicago Art Institute is planned for March. April’s bus trips will go to another play and to “Arts in Bloom” at the Milwaukee Art Museum. Aleta Murray is working on lectures and Mary is planning to arrange a trip to a Brewer’s game in the summer.
3. Mary presented Guidelines for Non-member Participation for Trips and Other Special Events to help event planners assure PLATO members have ample opportunity to register before available tickets and seats are offered to non-members. **Motion:** Mike Lovejoy moved and Harold Green seconded approval of the of the Special Events proposal to charge non-members \$5.00 more than the fee PLATO members pay for bus trips and other fee-based events. The motion passed unanimously. Implementation issues will be handled as they arise. In the interest of consistency the following procedure was outlined:
 - Each member will be allowed to register one non-member to accompany them to any special event. The non-member will be charged an extra \$5.00 above the fee for the member.
 - After a stated amount of time for members to register (announced in the registration information), non-members can register for any remaining available tickets/seats at a price \$5.00 above the cost to a member.
 - These guidelines will take effect beginning on July 1, 2013.
4. The Special Events Committee members offered to handle a pilot registration project for the “Arts in Bloom” trip. This would lessen the burden for Wendy who will be processing registrations for the April theater trip. Barry Orton noted that the payments and bus reservations would still have to be handled by DCS so the offer needs further discussion.

D. Financial Resources – Marv Beatty

1. Marv Beatty reported that the Committee is monitoring the status of the 501 (c) (3) nonprofit application which is still pending. They may approach Senator Tammy Baldwin or Representative Mark Pocan to request their help in getting a response from the IRS.

2. The Committee discussed the continued promotion of the PLATO Foundation at events and in resources such as the Spring and Fall Previews, the *Persimmon* and the Annual Luncheon.
3. The Financial Resources Committee made a proposal for a change in funding the cost of the PLATO scholarship awards. **Motion:** Mike Lovejoy moved and Marv Beatty seconded the proposal to transfer the cost of the Foundation's promotion and the scholarships to the earnings of the Foundation endowment rather than taking the funds from the PLATO Operations budget, starting with the next fiscal year. The motion passed unanimously. Foundation promotion has two goals: to publicize the scholarship awards and to encourage donations. By applying costs to the fund's earnings it takes pressure off the membership dues and addresses the concern of some members who don't care to support those efforts. 104 people donated to the fund through December 31, 2012. In addition to one very generous gift of \$7,600.00, 103 members gave a total of approximately \$9,500.00. Donors were acknowledged in the January *Persimmon*.

VI. OTHER COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Leadership Development – Patricia Becker

1. At the January 24th meeting the Task Force will finalize plans for what to do at the Spring 2013 Preview at the Madison Senior Center.
2. Some initiatives to be addressed are: providing more support for committees and starting an archive of PLATO materials. Wendy noted that she has maintained an archive of PLATO minutes, documents, correspondence, flyers etc. in the DCS office. It was noted that materials are being produced digitally by many different PLATO sources. Tim Otis suggested setting up a digital archive.
3. Patricia Becker asked PLATO Committees to compose position descriptions for chairs and organizational procedures that will assist new members when they join and/or lead the committees.

B. The Agora - Lauren Blough

Procedures for review and selection of art and literary works for Volume 3 have been in place for a few months. Wendy is receiving submissions and the review subcommittees are ready to begin after the February 1st deadline. A new editor-in-chief has not been found but it was suggested that we temporarily suspend the search via the Weekly Announcements in case readers might interpret that as "Volume 3 is in jeopardy." Tim Otis relayed a suggestion that maybe *The Agora* should be published every other year. Lauren Blough thought that might dampen enthusiasm.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

Administrative Change Recommendations – Tim Otis

The Administration Task Force met in January to firm up recommendations for addressing the issue of providing support for PLATO administrative tasks currently handled by Wendy. Under consideration was the hiring of a contract employee, to be paid with PLATO funds, who would handle some of the day-to-day PLATO tasks with the assistance of PLATO volunteers. PLATO does not want to assume the responsibilities of an employer. Barry Orton reported that Laura Ingram, Continuing Studies Associate Dean for Budget and Personnel, thought that LTE's receive more than the proposed \$10/hour for 8 hours/week and that student workers have variable schedules that would make them unavailable during holiday and exam periods. One idea was to recruit someone from the PLATO membership. The Task Force will meet again and the discussion was tabled until the February meeting.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. The Annual Luncheon is scheduled for May 22nd. Suggestions for speakers were offered: Vilas Zoo Director Ronda Schwetz, Richard Davidson Founder and Chair of the Center for Investigating Healthy Minds at the Waisman Center, Wisconsin State Journal Reporter George Hesselberg, and Jerry Apps Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Wisconsin history author. Aleta Murray will contact Ronda Schwetz and Marv Beatty will contact Jerry Apps to inquire about their availability on May 22nd. They will get back to Tim and he will send an electronic ballot to Board members to decide on the luncheon speaker. A donation to the speaker's organization was discussed and a "ballpark figure" of \$500.00 was considered.
- B. Tim Otis noted that membership dues will probably be increased to cover the costs of providing assistance to DCS with administrative tasks. In the past PLATO never overspent but current costs exceed the operations budget. A decision will be made at the March Board meeting so communication to members is very important. That was begun with Tim's article in the January *Persimmon* and the May luncheon is another opportunity for broadcasting the information. Once the formal decision is made a letter would be sent to members. Although it will depend on the amount of the revised cost sharing formula resulting from the MOA negotiations with DCS, initial discussion by Board members suggested an increase in the range of \$10.00 to \$15.00 for an annual fee of \$60.00 to \$65.00 and possibly \$90.00 for a couple, family or household. These amounts are in the lower range when compared to similar senior learning organizations, some of which charge \$400.00 to \$500.00 in annual individual membership fees. One suggestion was to increase the amount by \$5.00 annually but Treasurer, Mike Lovejoy, said it is more important to keep the dues in synch with the formula embedded in the MOA which is on a two year schedule. Mary Boyd asked if Special Events activities were the most costly (in terms of time spent) of Wendy's PLATO tasks. Sybil Better noted that the production costs of *The Agora* could be shifted to the members who want copies. They could order a copy by marking an added space on the membership forms and paying \$5.00 extra. Wendy noted that

dues received in April are applied to the following July – June membership year. Further discussion of resulting policy issues and prioritization of PLATO projects is necessary. One thing to keep in mind is that if a large increase results in 300 fewer members nothing has been gained.

IX. FUTURE BUSINESS

- A. Discussion of the Board’s role in providing leadership and policy development for the PLATO organization was delayed for a future meeting. What are the Board’s roles and responsibilities in this unique organization?

Meeting adjourned at 11:38 a.m.

NOTE: Next meeting Friday, February 15, 2013 at 9:30 a.m. DCS - 21 N. Park, Room 7041.
Mary Boyd will take minutes.

Respectfully submitted,
Lauren Blough